



From Attics to Archives:

Uncovering Our History One Woman at a Time

By Kristina Neumann

C.F.W. Walther. Franz Pieper. Walter Meier. While these names are commonly recognized in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS), for many the knowledge of LCMS women throughout the centuries stops with family history, leading to a gap in the history of our church body.

The biggest challenge facing my work as a historian of the LCMS is that although women have played a fundamental role through the church's history, no complete survey of their lives has yet been undertaken.

A shining beacon in the void of LCMS women's historical research is The Concordia Historical Institute and its quarterly publication, which tell the lesser known stories of Lutheran history: *Mrs. Enid Yancy's Story: A Commentary on Trinity's Transition to an Inner-City Congregation* by Kathryn M. Galchutt [72:3], *Katherine Lehmann and Church Work in India* by L.DeAne Lagerquist [61:4] and *To the Federation of Lutheran Women, Ft. Wayne, June 1980* by Marie Moehring [56:4].

The *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* has also made significant progress in collect-

ing the accounts of Lutheran women for a number of years. Nevertheless, many histories of the women Lutheran leaders in church and community, homemakers and mothers have yet to be told.

The Women's Leadership Institute* of Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW) has responded to its goal of encouraging research, thoughtful discussion, and exploration of the Biblical and historical record of women in the church by creating a collection of Lutheran women's history to be housed at the CUW campus. The main task is finding any biographical information relating to women in the LCMS that lie waiting to be discovered in archives, parish files, and storage closets. These include but are not limited to:

- ✕ Journals/Diaries
- ✕ Biographies
- ✕ Church histories that include sections on women's involvement
- ✕ Newspaper articles related to the activities of LCMS women
- ✕ Letters written by LCMS women
- ✕ Histories of local Ladies' Aid and missionary societies
- ✕ Lists of the names of significant women in LCMS churches throughout history

Women's histories can extend outside of the church to include the histories of Lutheran institutions such as schools, colleges, hospitals, and social service agencies. For example, an oral history project on twentieth-century Lutheran women missionaries in global mission has proved to be an interesting discovery for the library collection.

I hope to contribute the story of my

own Lutheran heritage. My grandmother was part of the first four-year women's class to graduate from Concordia University Chicago, while my own mother is a hardworking organist, Sunday school teacher, and wife of a LCMS pastor.

This current project only begins to skim the surface of the rich wealth of material on Lutheran women throughout the ages, yet the necessity of this research cannot be overemphasized in its importance to the entire history of our Synod and country.

Every Lutheran woman's story has significance. Your help is requested — and deeply appreciated — in uncovering your own history and the records of your church.

All materials can be sent to:
Lutheran Women's History Project
Concordia University Wisconsin
Women's Leadership Institute
12800 N. Lake Shore Drive
Mequon, WI 53097

*Please see www.concordiawli.org for more information.

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